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Victoria Street Newz

March 2008

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Vol. 4 No. 12

honouring diversity

We Are The People ...

A Treesit Communique

We are the people who have occupied the forest on the site of the proposed ‘Bear Mountain Interchange.’

We are from the towns of Victoria, Langford, Brentwood Bay, Sidney, Sooke, and Colwood on Coast Salish land. But more than anything else we are people concerned about our future generations’ ability to live and breathe on this planet.

Our basic reasons for being here are simple. The government structures established in colonial Canadian society are unacceptable. The present political structure is currently enabling our managerial society to exploit the land for the benefit of car culture. This is indeed an interesting part of human history as we possess unique opportunities like never before: We can continue to develop in a nineteen fifties style mentality and perpetuate the global economic paradigm that is melting the glaciers and putting holes in the ozone.

Or, we can learn to reduce our ecological footprint, we can learn to live sustainably. We need to consume to survive but we do not need to rape our planet. Let there be no mistake, the petroleum economy is killing us. At this point in our development we should be protecting what little there is left of our intact eco-systems. We should be limiting the growth of our cities, not carving out mountaintops and paving them over with highways.

It has been alleged in recent communication with the City of Langford that we are opposed to the interchange simply because there has not been a proper archaeological survey of the proposed path of the interchange. Golder Associates claim to be specialists in geological surveys yet they failed to notice even the most basic features of the land. One must assume that they are either grossly incompetent or completely corrupt (possibly both).

While this is assertion is not wrong, our objections run much deeper. We are opposed to the political and economic system that places private property interests, and short term financial gain over everything else. We oppose the management society dominated by car culture that ceaselessly continues to grow and dominate the earth.

We demand thorough questioning of these values: That one can own land and therefore determine its fate for all future generations; developers must not be allowed to dictate our future. *For more information: treesit.blogspot.com.*



It Doesn't Add Up

by Brian Mason

In late January, I attended a political love-in at the Cool Aid Society. The occasion was a carefully staged, public announcement on homelessness. Mayor Alan Lowe and Minister Responsible for Housing Rich Coleman (his chief portfolio is Forests and Range!) took turns heaping praise on the other for his determination to tackle this “urgent and complex” challenge. The event left me feeling very uncomfortable.

The audience that day was suits, plenty of them, fussing throughout with their Blackberries and cell phones. They listened as Mayor Lowe, so tightly gripping the lectern that I half expected to see him catapult himself into the air, enthusiastically announced an agreement to “expedite more than 170 new and upgraded housing units [in three separate locations] to reduce homelessness, including the relocation and expansion of the Streetlink emergency shelter.”

Nary a homeless person was present to hear what was being proposed. Not interested, not invited, not welcome, too cynical to care, who knows; but the politicians and bureaucrats were there in abundance. With over a month for the glow of January’s event to have dimmed, let’s consider a few reasons to disparage its political rhetoric.

To begin with, those benefitting the most from a system, advanced capitalism, better than any other at producing huge inequities of wealth can hardly be expected to understand the lives of those in the poorest class of society – or to want to change the system.

Implicit in the announcement, as a result, was the view that the homeless, in varying ways, need “fixing,” that there is something inherently wrong with them. This class-based lack of comprehension

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About Street Newz

“Building Bridges
within our Downtown Community”

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Victoria Street Newz welcomes written submissions including interviews, event reviews, cartoons, poetry, photographs, or artwork, but we can’t guarantee everything will be published. We reserve the right to edit, and will not print anything libelous, racist, sexist, or homophobic. Letters sent to the editor are assumed to be for publication, must include phone number or email (if possible, for confirmation) and may be edited for length. You can publish using a pseudonym, or anonymously.

We are devoted to a triple bottom line philosophy - concerned about our environmental and social, as well as financial well-being.

You can contribute to social change by supporting the Victoria Street Newz team, by pondering the root causes of poverty, and by working for peaceful, non-violent change.

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Victoria Street Newz is printed on 100% post consumer recycled paper with vegetable ink, at Horizon Publications - www.horizonpublications.ca, 604-254-8840.

Submissions (due by the 1st Friday for the next month’s issue), letters, or donations can be delivered to our mailbox at:

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JUST ANOTHER RANT

thanks to everyone who responded, mostly by email, to the street newz survey we conducted last november. i’ve posted the results summary on our website at relativenewz.ca.

i understand that contact with readers is important and informative and fun, and if they printed on recycled paper i would have voted for paul burnside in the monday magazine poll. his name wasn’t on the ballot but paul, who survived the wars in northern ireland, is the most devoted poet i know - his income results directly from his creativity. paul’s been living on victoria’s streets for over a decade. he’s got a degree in creative writing. he helped me brainstorm the ‘relativenewz’ name for our website. paul survives, and maintains a mostly pleasant demeanour, because of the kindness of others who provide him computer time, who buy his poems, who feed him, who donate to his dental fund, who do not kill him while he sleeps.

it’s unlikely paul will be eligible for the pre-election housing promise that has been bally-hooed in other local media. like my friends who inhabited the langford tree-sit, until truckloads of rcmp armed with assault rifles, tasers, and dogs raided and destroyed their home so that greed could proceed, paul is determinedly non-conformist - he eschews a paternalistic society that insists everyone should be happy busting their butts working to make someone else rich, living in a little box, paying taxes to elected officials who believe a mark on a piece of paper offers authority to ignore us until it’s time to look good for the next round of voting. for about a year i’ve been sending street newz to political prisoners mumia abu jamal, and leonard peltier, who are also being punished for their refusal to conform to the white colonialist infrastructure. i, like many others, believe these two were set up, unjustly and unfairly convicted. but their imprisonment will neither kill nor silence them. like joe hill, they will live forever. they wrote to me recently



by Janine Bandcroft



Leonard wrote: “I agree with you, read your article, gee but some people are hard headed aren’t they, being my generation was screaming the same message as yours and the generation before me were also strong advocates about not exploiting and destroying mother earth, then there were my people before them. And they still will not listen, man this greed & selfishness is one hard s.o.b. to beat. But I am beginning to see a little movement in today’s society, at least in some countries it is getting some serious media attention. In the spirit of Crazy Horse, Dok-Sha (means goodbye in the Lakota language, but more of a slang!).”

Mumia wrote: “Thanx so much for sending your paper down here to Babylon Central Prison. In a recent column, I cited Cameron Ward’s rather excellent piece on Tasers. You folks do quite remarkable work on a shoestring. Congratulations for doing an excellent work of journalism (I was about to say ‘product,’ but I didn’t want to sound capitalistic). I particularly love your “Ask A Herbalist” column (probably because I took a correspondence course with a Herbology College many years ago - a Canadian one, now that I think about it. And, unlike Christian, I don’t have a B.Sc., the school did grant an M.H. (Master Herbologist) degree upon graduation.) The guy does good work. Thanks for everything -- and keep up the good work!”

You can write to these two (and they’re both accepting donations for their legal defense, if you’re so inclined) at:

The Leonard Peltier Defence Committee
c/o Betty (Peltier) Solano,
1828 14th St. SO#2, Fargo, N. Dakota, 58103

Mumia Abu-Jamal
AM 8335, SCI-Greene,
175 Progress Drive, Waynesburg, PA 15370

OPINION

Would That We Live In Peace

by Jim Hickey

What would become of the human condition were we to live in peace? The short answer has to be that folks might just cease being human. War is as ubiquitous and perennial as the grass. Conflict is as necessary to human survival as intelligence.

However, given the acuity of destructive technologies, citizens might also ponder what will become of their collective condition if they refuse to manifest something akin to peaceable relations. One huge impediment to harmonious living is a fundamental pretension and dishonesty about the nature of humankind. A way of joining these ideas is to state, first, that peace is difficult to achieve because people are reasonably and intelligently pugnacious and otherwise conflict prone, and, second, that all men and women who want human life to remain plausible need to be willing to face the actual nature of the beast, so to speak. Thus, while a ‘Garden-of-Eden’ condition may never come to pass, people can, simply by accepting their fundamental selves, reduce the likelihood of conflagratory, ecocidal immolation of one sort or another.

Cain and Abel are echoes of more ancient rivalries in the misty mystery of the past. We can show, though, that in more recent martial developments, a turn-the-other-cheek approach would appeal only to a very few stalwart souls. Europe was justifiably afire against the depredations of Adolf Hitler, for example, just as the Chinese and the Koreans rebelled righteously against the brutal Japanese empire. At least twice-once at the beginning and again “four score and seven years later” the United States would have ceased to exist without organized carnage. Large-scale conflicts seem to result from either attempts to impose or react to injustice. In this view, the battles of the past are a way of righting things out of balance, of reducing inequities and achieving redress. The only exceptions would be the occasional instances of successful genocide, as perhaps was the fate of humanity’s close cousin, the Neanderthal.

Rather than try to plumb what in men and women has led to war, however, current policies put a gigantic, fatuous

‘smiley-face’ on human proclivities. This sort of ‘just-be-nice’ posturing inevitably squashes attempts to address deep-rooted disadvantage and inequity. In turn, suppressing aggressive action against injustice inherently creates socially explosive conditions. Wherever on earth “Military Madness” most insanely risks mass murder, this dynamic-injustice, pretention, resistance, suppression, explosion-is visibly at work.

Consider the cases of Colombia, the Phillipines, Central Africa, Central Asia, not to mention the real ‘shooting wars’ ongoing in Afghanistan and Iraq. All of these qualities characterize those bloodlettings. Moreover, social peace is arguably most advanced where societies have ferociously, confrontationally, and honestly fought such issues out. Eastern Europe, for example, or China and Vietnam,

exemplify different pathways to such a position. And although many Americans would find the exercise disgusting, Cuba and much of the rest of Latin America offer object lessons in this regard. Psychologists put the matter simply: “What we resist will persist.”

Clearly, no topic as monumental as war and peace is simple to summarize in 500 words

or so. On the other hand, the basic points of this analysis seem plausible as a start. Folks can no more eliminate conflict than they can eliminate hunger or sexuality. If we had never fought, chimpanzees would occupy the academy and the country club. On the other hand, we must, if we care about the potential for the children of today to live fully, or at all, believe in the potential for a more peaceful world. By acknowledging our pugnacity, in combination with ameliorating social inequity and incapacity, we might conceivably come close enough to both achieving peace and averting the threat of holocaust, both of which are jointly essential for the species to continue. As Albert Einstein was wont to say, “Either mankind will put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind.”

Jim Hickey, in all his guises, has been striving to make a difference as a writer, teacher, and producer for thirty odd years in the Southern USA. Correspondence and inquiries, as well as assignments, are welcome at spindoctordjimbo@gmail.com. Check the website: writerrightwrite.com



It Doesn't Add Up (cont'd from page 1)

too often drives the politics of homelessness. On this day, the speakers made it clear: The best fix for homeless people – as well as return on social investment – would be to render them employable, homogenised towards social conformity and turned into “productive members of society.”

Said fixing would begin by relocating all the emergency shelter beds from Streetlink to Ellice Street in Rock Bay, part of an undisguised strategy to “clean up” Store Street, which suddenly finds itself pricey and gentrified. The speaker representing the downtown business association made this goal explicit in her comments. Rich condo owners and upscale home-furnishings store managers don’t want people sleeping in their doorways. A Cool Aid director later defended moving shelter beds to an industrial wasteland – currently the site of a park – on the grounds that Streetlink itself used to be in that kind of neighbourhood. Strange logic. Why not plainly state you just want street people as out of sight as possible – until they can be fixed.

As for details, these were, like the beds, scattered. It was an announcement about proposed beds – that is, about political good intentions – which are at least two years away from completion. What’s been agreed to, really, is the “promise” of provincial funding and a pledge to expedite the approval processes at the municipal level. Rezoning and public hearings are yet to come – as are a municipal and provincial election. Mayor Lowe certainly won’t be mayor to see it all through, while Rich Coleman likely will be busy elsewhere come crunch time.

Further, the number of beds proposed was confusing and imprecise. Some would be new beds, others reconfigured beds, while qualifiers like “approximately” and “anticipated” framed the announcement. Subtracting it all down, there may be fewer than 95 net new beds in two years’ time. Projected beds, that is. Provided all goes according to plan. Assuming priorities and budgets remain in place. No wonder Victoria’s thousand-plus homeless skipped the announcement.

Another point about the numbers, even if all 80 new and replacement shelter beds were built within the two-year estimate, they would be insufficient to meet current demand. Streetlink today often squeezes in up to 95 people at night.

Some have said it’s not worth criticising the announcement for being “too little, too late” because this criticism, though accurate, is old news. This logic also escapes me. It, the criticism that is, demands to be repeated precisely because, for over two decades, the three levels of government have done virtually nothing in the social housing field. Then, with the Olympics in sight and a few knee-jerk announcements, they are trying to claim the moral high ground. It’s pathetic. The proposed additional beds won’t even equal the capacity of a single, new high-rise condo building.

With cleanup of the streets in mind, January’s announcement focussed exclusively on expensive capital projects (but with a former real estate agent as the Minister Responsible for Housing and Alan Lowe an architect, what do you expect). As if people currently sleeping beneath a bush in Beacon Hill Park must go directly into the equivalent of an expensive condo suite. Not that they’re not worthy of such space, but there seems to have been no attempt to meet street people on their own terms.

Daniel Quinn, of Ishmael trilogy fame, argues that, as poverty is a social status and an invention of civilisation, homelessness is beyond control – it can’t be defeated within the current culture. He regards the homeless as being “beyond civilisation,” as out of reach of its hierarchy which, at most, is good only at oppressing, harrying and obstructing them. In Quinn’s approach, the dominant culture would help the homeless habilitate those places they now find as refuge.

Portland’s tent city is just such an example. So, too, would be the providing of plentiful washroom and shower facilities, laundry services, safe and secure storage for belongings, proper carts for carrying possessions, and similar amenities – all far less expensive than Lowe and Coleman’s “bricks and mortar” proposal. But doing these things frightens respectability, it would ruffle urban sensibilities and subvert the culture’s desire to “fix” the homeless into employable, “civilised” urbanites.

Finally, the announcement ceremony allowed no opportunity for questions. The suits and politicians seemed well-meaning enough, even believed they were proposing something significant in a “watershed” moment for the homeless. But they were all of the benefitting classes, participating in and profiting from a common world view, one which hopes to corral those outside itself. So not allowing questions was perhaps a good thing, as it can be difficult to bridge realities.

Submitted by Brian Mason, a writer, philosopher and activist who lives in James Bay.



On February 3rd, the 1st Poverty Olympics were performed before a full house at Carnegie Theatre in Vancouver.

Mascots Itchy the Bedbug, Creepy the Cockroach and Chewy the Rat encouraged contestants to show their talents in the poverty line high jump, welfare hurdles, and more...

Thanks to sponsors: Raise the Rates, DTES Neighbourhood House, CCAP, BC PWA, Streams of Justice, VANDU, and to PovNet.org for the photo.



COPS
by Red

Dear Readers,

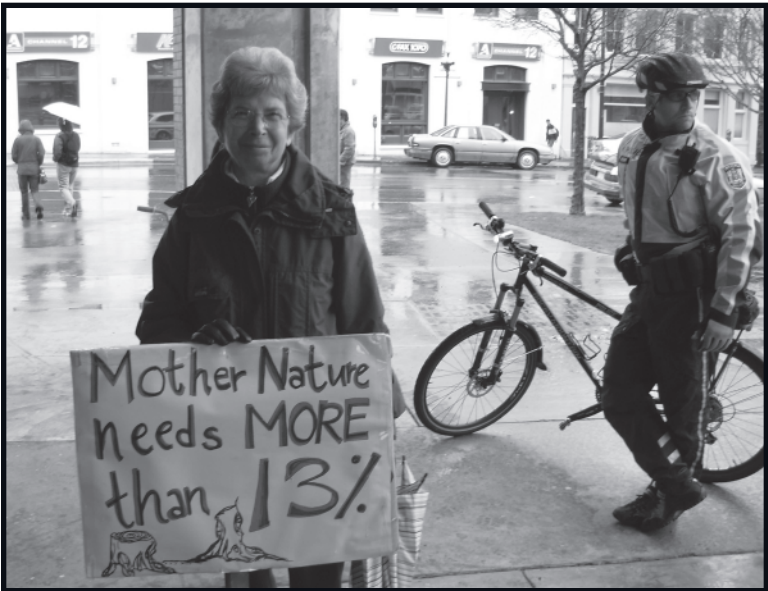
You know of my writings, so I must remind you these are my observations and have not been rendered by anyone.

Everybody knows cops, love or hate them, they are really a very big part of our lives. These are the men and women who shape our existence, be it good or bad - that depends which side of the law you choose.

Everybody has a decision to make in order to live in a sensible society. I am not a cop lover, nor a cop hater, but there are times, from my point of view, things can go good or really bad. It all depends on how you look at things.

For example, I am not only a street person, but also someone who has an opinion of what goes on around me. I think cops have one of the hardest jobs on earth. Who in their right mind would do some of the things that they go through day in and day out. Just think of the things they go up against. Drugs, murder, domestic disturbances, racial and political turmoil, just to name a few. These people are looked on either as good guys or bad. Would you trade your present way of life and try to do what they have to face each and every time they step into things that you only wish that you could dream of?

So remember, good or bad, they are here to stay. So either be for them or face what could really change your way of doing things.



COPS
by Ted

I sat on the street yesterday,
and I watched 3 bike-Cops ride by
in military formation.
I knew they were up to NO-GOOD because,
at the high-speed they’re traveling,
they didn’t notice the criminal
activity happening in front of me.

ie: a woman was being hassled her boy friend,
the Hudson-Bay corporation making big money in their mall ...
you know, a mall ... ON STOLEN-LAND...!

I continued to watch these bike-Cops,
(the wolf - pack type creations they are).
I watched as the two “ALPHA-MALES” maneuver their bikes
to surround the ONE FEMALE, riding in their pack.

Suddenly, they, (one of the males), noticed a homeless man
and the entire pack lurched forward !!!!!!!

Moments later the Cops are searching a MAN.
(a “man,” who by the way, should be inside one of those
PHONEY “out-of-the-rain” 24/7 shelters the
Provincial-Government PAID our local charities FOR)
<<< ie: PAID FOR , but NOT PROVIDED...!!!! >>>
you know ,,,, the shelters...?
“WE” , THE TAX-PAYER’S PAID FOR ???
----- by the way, taking TAX-PAYER’S money ,
under FRAUD-U-LENT terms is still called FRAUD!
Just because it’s TAX-PAYER’s money ,
it shouldn’t make any kind of difference...

----- Anyways ----- I stray -----
A homeless man was searched today.

The OBVIOUS reason
was because he has NO OTHER PLACE TO GO ...!

Although money was paid to our local charities,
the 24/7 - “out-of-the-rain shelters” - DO NOT EXIST
despite that money ???

we are being asked to supply 16 new-cops
(?) go figure

Sayonara Mayor Lowe
by West Mundy

The architect of all that was Victoria has let us know that he will not be seeking re-election. After 15 years on Council, 9 years as Mayor, we now have enough condominiums to last the entire province of Manchuria. Meanwhile there are 1500 homeless, no firm plans for [enough] affordable housing in the next ten years, and even if you can afford to rent, there is a less than 1% vacancy. To make matters worse, just wait until you see your taxes go up this year over the entire Vancouver Island region. I would suggest that every taxpayer, even those living abroad, contest these maniacal tax raises and flood City Hall with [recycled] paper up to the Council Chamber.

Mr. Lowe, we never wanted to be West Vancouver and we never needed to be sold a bar of bad soap, with over-runs on the Police Station and especially the new Memorial Barn and Produce Store, (though the Salmon kings are in

first place and getting much needed defense and goalie help from Manitoba ...) But to get back to Mayor Lowe’s departure, if you’re going go now and don’t let the door hit your bum on the way out. Your developer friends are all rich while the rest of us deal with 109.7 a litre gasoline and a shocking increase in groceries. The Hudson Bay building should have been the Central Library, but your “partner,” R.G. Properties, are alleged to fudge their financials and again allegedly threw kickbacks to Oak Bay, Saanich, and Esquimalt so he could make more on the “lofts” of Hudson. You will not be remembered well by the majority of the population and you personally [allegedly] pushed for the removal of the lawn bowling pitch in a back room deal. You should go down there yourself and explain to every senior why a heritage site was expropriated and why no lengthy public review was advertised anywhere in the print media.

Mr. Lowe I will give you a D Minus for your reign of terror.

Tenants Know Your Rights!
By Kevin Nakanishi



In late January, the announcement of the new Streetlink shelter in Rock Bay re-focused public attention on homelessness in Victoria. 78 new supportive housing units and 35 new shelter beds is, depending on how you look at it, either a step in the right direction, or a proverbial drop in the bucket. On the other side, Rock Bay residents fumed about the lack of consultation that occurred before the decision was made to transform a neighborhood park into a shelter. In other words, finding a solution for homelessness remains a controversial issue. It’s important to remember that in Victoria, the causes of homelessness are often complex, and out of the public eye. Factors such as disabilities, tenancy law, and the current welfare system can all combine to stack the deck against Victoria’s “at risk” tenants. Single people who suffer from mental or physical disabilities can receive from \$531 a month in disability assistance from the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. These people also receive up to \$375 a month for shelter. This makes sense: if you are having money problems, the government helps pay the rent.

What doesn’t make sense is how eviction can impact someone relying on disability assistance. From a starting point, many tenants in BC are unaware of the rules and law surrounding tenancy, and people living in supported housing are no different. These “at risk” tenants walk a tightrope, and any slip—late payment of rent, damage to their apartment—can easily start a chain reaction that results in an eviction. If you were previously living in supported housing, this means ending up on the street without a roof over your head. The upshot? If you become homeless, the Ministry may actually cancel your monthly \$375 shelter allowance. From a strictly numbers perspective, this sort of makes sense—if you aren’t paying rent, you no longer have that expense to pay. However, in real life, this makes no sense: if you rely on disability assistance, and are now living on the street, the government actually gives you less assistance than it would to someone who already has a roof over their head. Maria Montgomery, an advocate with the local Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS), points out that for many people, even the best-case-scenario of \$375 a month cannot overcome many barriers to housing. Mental health and physical disability problems make it difficult, if not impossible, for many people to successfully apply for new housing. And of course, this doesn’t even address the difficulties of finding a non-subsidized room in Victoria for \$375 a month.

The bottom line is that, for many people, by the time they are evicted, it becomes extremely difficult to get another roof overhead. The best way to avoid any possible housing problems is to learn about tenancy rights and responsibilities, and to avoid doing anything (for example, making late rent payments) that would destroy those rights. If you, or someone you know, are having housing problems, an organization in Victoria may also be able to provide you with a free advocate to help you argue your case with the Residential Tenancy Branch. For more information, contact some of the organizations listed below:

Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS) #415 - 620 View Street Victoria BC, V8W 1J6 Phone: (250) 361-3521 http://tapsbc.baremetal.com/	Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre (TRAC) Tenant Hotline (Mon-Thurs, 9 AM – 5 PM) 1-800-665-1185
Action Committee of People with Disabilities 926 View Street Victoria, BC, V8V 3L5 (250) 383-4105 http://www.actioncommittee.ca/	The Law Centre 1221 Broad Street Victoria, V8W 2A4 (250) 385-1221 reception@thelawcentre.ca

The author thanks Patrick Sullivan, Maria Montgomery, and Glenn Gallins for their input and assistance.

PBSC-UVic is a student organization that is not able to give legal advice. This article is intended as legal information only. Should you have a specific legal problem, it is advisable to consult a lawyer. Special thanks to Irene Faulkner of Underhill, Faulkner, Boies-Parker for her assistance. For more information on our organization, please visit: www.pbsc-uvic.ca.
The UVic Chapter of Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) wants to help answer some of your questions about the law. If you’d like to suggest a topic, please drop ideas off at Street Newz’s mailbox at 1027 Pandora Ave. or email us at pbsc.articles@gmail.com.

Utopian Idealism
by C’daoim



So it appears the issue of poverty and homelessness has come to the forefront of political thought again. There are excuses I’ve heard that display a lot of presumption on the part of some of our citizenry, “they want to be there, they are lazy” and even heard our impoverished fellow citizens referred to as a “messy expensive social problem.” Where did this idea of projecting poverty as an evil come from? Ever hear of Rev. Thomas Malthus (1766-1834)? He was an English economist who wrote an essay in 1798 entitled “Essay upon the Principles of Population” which would start a debate that would go on for a few years. His apparent intention was to initiate a discourse on the problem of over-population in a country, and methods to deal with it. Of course with any era specific debate we must understand that the contributors were cutting into new ideas and ways of thinking which is what social evolution is all about. We don’t necessarily have to agree with their conclusions and we should recognize that their solutions to problems are not the definitive answer to the species’ situation forever. Remember this was an era when women didn’t have rights and slavery was really booming as a commodities market. Anyway, it is the ideas stated that, in retrospect; really stand out to me when I read this stuff because they demonstrate the mindset of the contributors to these debates. These statements show bigger issues to me that seem to be overlooked by the citizenry of modern times, probably because we don’t debate about it today, mostly we just accept that this is the way it is. Here is an example of what I mean: “A man who is born into a world already possessed [owned], if he cannot find substinance from his parents on whom he has a just demand and if the society do not want his labour, has no ‘right’ to the smallest portion of food and in fact has no business to be where he is...”¹ Malthus made this statement in his updated 1803 Essay, and the reason I put quotations around the word ‘right’ is because that struck me in the strangest of ways. I believe it has pretty big implications besides the obvious, which is that poor people have no right to food. It is the ease with which Malthus displays his authority to define the rights of others without feeling that he must justify this power he has assumed to be his. As he understands it, he has the right to decide who lives and who dies. We must remember that this is happening within a generation of the “Enlightenment” which would propel the Industrial Revolution. The debate of course would bring out all types of responses, some for his ideas and others against his way of thinking. The thing that stands out to me is that Malthus and his proponents are actually demonstrating the idea that one class of citizen has the right to define the rights of another class of citizen and that division will be determined around wealth. Possibly, it was an easy assumption to make at the time because for Malthus and his world, that was the way it always was. But things change as societies evolve. Change was the object of the Enlightenment and the changes it brought about are very debateable still today. Yet, it would appear that his ideas have still got their claws in the social fabric of modern society. People of modern society have continued to fight for their rights since then, be they poor, female, middle-class, aboriginal, gay or lesbian, and for the poor the necessities of life are still an issue. The opponents to Malthus’ ideas were people like Arthur Young and William Hazlitt (and a long list of others) who found the system to be unfair and causing suffering to fellow citizens. These men would be labelled “Utopians” because of their wish to create an ideal society that brought about an end to poverty and its oppression on fellow citizens. Which brings me back to the beginning. Certainly there are citizens who feel that everyone should just get a job and take care of themselves, but until it is explained how poverty crept into an unsuspecting society or if it has always been with us and the causes never properly identified and dealt with, we could call that “Utopian Idealism.”

Become informed...society needs you.

¹ Andrew Pyle, ed. Introducton. Population; Contemporary Responses to Thomas Malthus. By Thomas Malthus et al. Bristol, England: Thoemmes Press 1994



Paving Paradise

Langford has demonstrated a lack of respect towards its citizens and the democratic process.

On February 13, Langford officially began work on the Spencer Road Interchange by calling in a large police presence, reported to number over 50, along with Langford Bylaw Officers to forcibly remove the half a dozen tree-sitters and tear out trees at the end of Leigh Road. This despite the fact that over 2250 Langford citizens (more than 10% of eligible voters) signed a petition asking for a public referendum to approve the \$25 million borrowing for the project, that the financing for the interchange has not been secured, and that the bylaws creating the agreement to build the Interchange have not yet been adopted by Langford City Council.

“Langford has not received approval from the province’s Inspector of Municipalities to borrow the \$25 million, and yet they talk and act like everything is all approved. It is not,” says Cheryl McLachlan, who took part in the canvassing. “Additionally, after adopting the Spencer Road Interchange bylaw in late January, Council in early February repealed it and introduced a new bylaw to replace it that they have not yet adopted. At this time, even Langford has not given final approval to the project.”

Steven Hurdle, who organized the petition, questions the timing of today’s events. Hurdle states: “The City has made no attempt to open a dialogue with the thousands of Langford residents who signed the petition, other than Deputy Mayor Denise Blackwell’s suggestion that those citizens might not have understood what they were doing. Langford Councillors brag about how many public meetings they’ve held about the project but, up until the poorly advertised December 27th, 2007 special meeting of the council, these were all about building the Spencer Road interchange and none were about borrowing \$25 million dollars or the lack of a public approval process. I believe the signatories knew exactly what they were doing and they deserve to be respected for taking a stand; they signed not because they thought their taxes would immediately go up but because they are concerned and want a say in their community. Some of the signatories would vote in favour, but they want a chance to have their say in a referendum.”

Petitioner Herman Surkis, noting the strong police presence in today’s events, wondered “How much is this huge police action going to cost Langford taxpayers, and could those costs have been avoided with a more respectful and diplomatic process?”

For more information contact: Steven Hurdle, Petition Organiser steven.hurdle@gmail.com 250-884-0575

Hepatitis C and Me
by Jayson Dahling

Prior to my diagnosis with HCV in January 2005 I was a vital, active, 45-year old gay man. I worked hard and played hard – my hours were filled with activity. I was generally happy, motivated, outgoing, and well adjusted. It appeared that I “had it together.”

I had been diagnosed with HIV in ‘86 and fortunately my body was able to fight the virus on its own. I did not require HIV medicine until 2002. Although I was HIV+ for almost two decades, I felt somewhat invincible - I had never had to medically “deal” with my disease. This all came crashing down in 2005.

During my last relationship my partner and I started occasionally using Methamphetamine (meth) and practiced group sex. After the relationship ended I continued to use meth recreationally. I worked long challenging hours in a growing company and the sex and drugs were my release – at least so I thought. One weekend things got out of control and I injected meth with a shared needle.

A few days later I got frightened and went to my MD for a blood test. Soon thereafter my worst fears were realized - I found out I had Hepatitis C. The diagnosis took months to “set-in” but my body began manifesting side effects. I had been on a mild antidepressant for 3 years. I began to get occasional headaches in my occipital ridge – these arose out of nowhere and lasted for days. Additionally I started losing energy, gaining weight and becoming ornery. My liver enzymes started to fall and my MD had me take a Fibrosure test that simulates a biopsy (with often highly inaccurate results). The results of the test were not good – it stated that I was in Stage 3 of Fibrosis. My MD referred me to a local gastroenterologist who had a good history with co-infected patients.

I saw the new Doctor and immediately stopped drinking alcohol – by that time my consumption was significantly less and this proved not to be too much of a hardship. The Gastro MD said he would do a biopsy after 6 months off drinking. The results showed I was in between Stage 1 and 2 of cirrhosis. The Gastro MD felt that because I was relatively young and my HIV under control I should start HCV treatment. My regular MD disagreed and felt that I should wait the year or two for antiretroviral drugs to be approved by the FDA.

This created a conundrum for me – one Doctor said to wait and the other said to proceed. I found out later that this is representative of all things with HCV. You will have symptoms, take tests and receive medical advice. The health care professionals and support personnel you speak with will all read the tea leaves differently. Ultimately you must take control of your own health, learn the facts and determine the best way for you to proceed. You need to make a decision you can live with afterward. Easier said than done, by the way.

I decided to consult a specialist on HIV/HCV co-infection. He gave me many more tests, analyzed my biopsy results and came up with the same results- go on treatment or wait for the new drugs. After much deliberation I decided to move ahead with the

Pegulated Interferon treatment along with Ribiviran. My Doctor was participating in a clinical trial of these two therapies used for co-infected patients – they were seeking to determine what level of Ribiviran was appropriate for HIV+ patients. The treatment ended up being the most difficult thing I have done in my life.

Incidentally, the Gastro MD and my Hepatologist both felt that I had been infected with HCV for 20+ years. It probably happened sometime around my infection with HIV although I am not sure how. I have rationalized that it doesn’t matter how it happened but that it did and I needed to act appropriately and responsibly.

I decided to start treatment at the end of summer in 2006. My plan was to work through the treatment and take my injection on Friday afternoon. I also was advised to bump up the dose of my antidepressant, as the strong medicines would most likely upset my current regimen of Celexa. At about 3 months my Doctor added a 2nd antidepressant - Welbutrin. I am happy to say that while on the 48 weeks of therapy I never was that depressed. I attribute this to great emotional support from my family, friends, the community, my Doc and his team. In regard to work - my plans required adjustment – the treatment caused me to be extremely tired and not able to deal with the typical day-to-day issues of a growing company. After 1 month on treatment I determined that I would go on disability.

As someone who never had to question my ability to do things, being on treatment was a major psychological adjustment. From everything I have heard, read, and researched, each person’s journey on treatment is personal and will differ from others. I fortunately was spared side effects such as flu symptoms, loss of appetite, loss of hair and major depression. I did however win the jackpot in my loss of stamina, fatigue, dry skin and the omnipresent headache in my occipital ridge. What caused me the most grief, however, was my inability to concentrate and articulate my thoughts. What a paradox - I had all this time to read yet I couldn’t concentrate on anything longer than a USA Today style newspaper story. Often I would lose my train of thought when trying to express my thoughts with others. Losing these characteristics and gaining over 20 pounds all contributed to me losing a big chunk of my self-confidence.

After about 90 days on the treatment the Interferon and Ribiviran were decimating my white and red blood cells. My Hepatologist had me add Procrit and Nuepogen to the treatments, which helped to manage the problem, yet required biweekly



injections and caused some new side effects of their own.

The 48 weeks went by slowly at first and then moved into an eventual rhythm. I worked to ensure that I got out of the house at least every other day and forced myself to interact with others even though I didn’t feel like it. I found that certain friends and family were unable to deal with the person I was on treatment and avoided me. Others were superstars and did everything they could to help me feel love and acceptance.

I went to a weekly support group and it helped immensely to hear and speak with others in the same condition. It gave me hope to hear their stories and how they coped with their illness. I also got the opportunity to take care of others emotionally – at times just by listening and sometimes through sharing my own experiences. Through my group I found out about acupuncture and massage which were invaluable in helping me deal with the treatment side effects, especially the headaches. I also began to meditate each morning – this helped to accept my circumstances and face each day with some level of hope and joy.

After 8 weeks on the treatment I had a two log drop in my detectable viral load and was virus free by the 12th week. I am quite thankful this was persistent throughout the entire 48-week treatment. It has now been 6+ months for me off the treatment and my viral load remains undetectable. A few weeks ago I had a liver biopsy and my liver is somewhere between stages 0 and 1. I am grateful that I have had a SVR and each day feel like a little more of my brain gets turned back on. I plan on starting work again as soon as I get a new job.

I am no longer on any form of antidepressant and my headaches are completely gone. I have been exercising rigorously almost daily and have lost most of the weight I put on during the treatment. Although the treatment for HCV was the hardest thing I have ever had to go through, I feel that it changed me in a positive way and that I am a much better individual than I was at the onset.

During those 11 months I often looked out my front window and saw people riding their bikes and enjoying life. I am happy to report that I have joined these people and am now out on my bike and enjoying the fresh air and sunshine.

Dear Couz, by Jennifer Hastie

It’s travel time from our part of the world, eh Couz; have you seen the ads for travelling to Peru to see Machu Picchu?

Machu Picchu was built some time during the 14th century by the Incas. It lies high in the Andes, close to 8,000 feet above sea level, south of the equator. Like our 1st nations peoples, the Inca did not have a writing system. No matter, they still built an advanced system of agriculture, architecture and government. Some of their building structures still stand solidly today. As well, their agricultural system is actually being re-taught to present day rural peoples living high in the Andes, because there is recognition that the Inca farming system was advanced and self-sustaining.

Cuzco, the former Inca capital, lies at 13,000 feet, high in the Andes mountains. In 1535, after the Spanish conquered the Inca, the capital was moved ‘way down to Lima, which lies at sea level. Today, Cuzco, looks mostly like a Spanish Colonial city, unless you get off the beaten track, as I did. I found many walls that looked like (and probably were, said the locals) Inca stonework, still in use and in fine condition.

Machu Picchu is a far distance from Cuzco. We took a 6 hour train trip following a mountain river, and finally, a 25 minute bus ride up into the mountains.

Wow! After a short walk through the trees, we were finally there. We looked down on the huge archeological site. Machu Picchu has always been a spiritual site. Luckily for the Incas and ourselves, the Spanish “missed” this site, or else it would have been destroyed. The Spanish apparently made a point of destroying all sacred sites of conquered peoples.

Machu Picchu became overgrown and unused after the Incas were conquered by the Spanish until an American archeologist, Hiram Bingham, came upon it in 1911. He hauled off thousands of artifacts to Yale University from the site. It is my understanding that today, there are talks going on to return some of these artifacts to Peru.

When the authorities began to rebuild Machu Picchu, they found that the stones—some of them

as heavy as 15 tons--were carved in such a detailed manner that the workers were able to put each stone back in its proper place. Also, the stones did not come from the surrounding area. How did they get them up this high in the mountains, Couz? They hadn’t even invented the wheel to help them with carts. Some of these stones remained so close together that even today you cannot get as much as a razor blade between them.

There’s a magical feeling about Machu Picchu. Built between two steep mountain peaks, it is huge. The clouds roll in and out, sometimes below you, sometimes above you. The sun comes and goes; the rain comes and goes. I was in awe. Even the many tourists scrambling over the terraces didn’t detract from the spiritual beauty of this beautiful site.

I think about the Inca’s amazing ability to keep track of food production and distribution. They built foot highways with overnight stops for the runners to carry supplies and messages along organized trade routes throughout their huge empire. All of these tasks were organized and tabulated by an intricate system of coloured strings and knots along each string. And it worked. The Inca may not

have developed a written language, but they were able to govern a group of 8 million people. They were also considered to be the most advanced peoples in medicine of all ancient peoples, say some books.

What’s happened to the Inca? Well, Couz, they are still around, even though the Spanish, by bringing small pox to them, cut their numbers down to about 1/8th of their original population. Now today, many live in extreme poverty.

When we returned to Cuzco from Machu Picchu, four of us went to the outskirts of the city to see a school and community centre for the Quechuas, the present day Inca. The Centre is run by a non-profit organization called “Peru’s Challenge.” This group has built a two room school building. The group was now working on providing toilet facilities in a separate building. You see, Couz, the government won’t pay to build a school, although they will pay for a teacher when there is a building in which to conduct lessons.

About 50 children turned out to greet us on a Sunday afternoon for a chance to learn English and have some food. All looked extremely poor; some very dirty; but almost all of them really excited to see us and listen to us talk “English.”

More than 50% of Peru’s 20 million people live “in extreme poverty,” so the organization tells us, and more than a quarter of Peru’s children never attend school, rising to more than three-quarters in the rural areas. Children are often used to help the family’s economic situation.

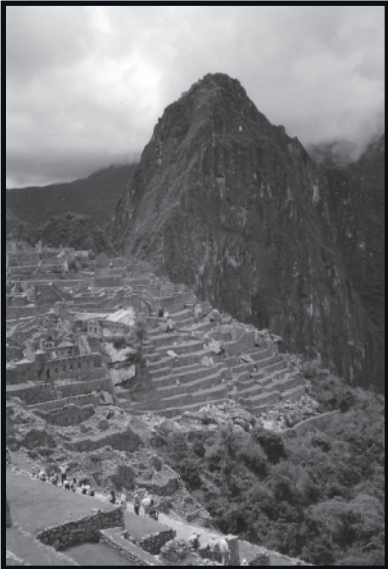
Back in Lima, the contrast between the rich and the poor is, probably, the worst that we have ever seen. Our hotel was located in the rich area of town. Residents here have large homes with gardens of trees and flowers surrounded by locked gates and walls. Sprinkling systems run water liberally to their gardens, but we learn that the other citizens of Lima have no water between 5 p.m. and 5 a.m. every day. There are no social service programs and the average salary is about \$150 US per month. Gas is \$1.00/litre.

So what’s my point, you ask. Well, Couz, like so many parts of the world, these facts about the Inca show how magnificent civilizations come and go. What group is “on top” during one era is “on the bottom” at another time. You tell me that has happened to many civilizations down through the ages. Yes, Couz, you are right, but that doesn’t mean that it IS right.

Why can’t we care more for those who are being oppressed by the dominant culture? Why can’t we see

that other cultures have much to teach us? The many social and economic problems of both the Inca and our First Nations’ people today reflect an inability to care about and respect someone who is different from ourselves. Oppressed peoples are very aware of that message. Native Indians, whether on or off reserve, need to be treated fairly. They need proper access to water, housing and user-friendly government services. The recent housing starts in Victoria are just a drop in the bucket. Don’t let our Native Indians become like the Inca today. Can we really consider ourselves civilized when most of us ignore these concerns?

Jennifer and her husband live in Victoria today. She is a healthy, active senior who enjoys writing volunteer articles for various publications.



Rafah Today: A Taste of Freedom

by Mohammed Omer

January 26th - “I finally taste freedom now—at least a temporary freedom of movement,” a 32 year old Gazan man rejoiced, the Gaza-Egypt border newly opened. Thousands climbed over Israel’s downed Wall, a Wall which encompasses and contains the Gaza Strip. The hungry, assaulted, and ignored crowds clamoured into Egypt to stock up on daily goods, basic foods, and medical supplies.



In Rafah, crucial shipments of daily living necessities including packages of cement, spare auto and vital machine parts and fuel, flowed from Egypt into Gaza across a border rendered wide-open since Wednesday when militants blew down portions of the concrete and steel wall, allowing hundreds of thousands of Gazans, many caged-in for nearly 18 months, to stream into Egypt for shopping and a luxurious whiff of freedom.

Egyptian border security guards initially stood by as huge crowds surged into Egypt, but on Wednesday, they attempted to ease the chaos of traffic, directing the countless pedestrians, donkey carts and bicycles.

Rafah has been awake 24 hours a day lately, a new phenomenon: usually by sunset people are home, hoping to avoid being targeted by Israeli attacks. In a border town such as Rafah, in southern Gaza, security is risky, to say the least, after sundown. Yet now, masses –hundreds of thousands!!—of people choose to go shopping even in the middle of the night. If not shopping, then people meander to “breathe fresh air,” as one young man replied, en route home with cheese and milk.

Israel declared it would not send emergency shipments of fuel into Gaza on Thursday as it had initially promised earlier in the week. The fuel is vital to running Gaza’s main power plant, shut down last week after Israel imposed a complete closure on Gaza in what Israel says was a response to the launching of home-made rockets towards Israel. With the newly-opened border, Israeli officials have said that as long as Gazans are getting supplies through Egypt there is no need for Israel to send shipments.

The spokesman of Hamas has denied involvement in blasting holes in the border. Hamas says, however, that the prison break is a ‘normal reaction’ from a population which has been increasingly starving, dying, and destitute since Israel imposed its blockade. The closures, which were tightened after Hamas took control over Gaza in June 2007, have led to severe shortages of food supplies, drinkable water, cement, fuel and electricity necessary for medical and daily functions, as well as cigarettes and many other basic things. Something as simple as candles has become an impossible luxury in Gaza’s markets.

As I write now, Gaza rejoices, enjoying a moment of fresh air, a brief, and unusual, respite, from the near-daily Israeli attacks resulting in Gaza civilian bloodshed. But despite the joy from the open border and the vital goods which can be bought in Egypt, tragedy remains in Gaza: late Thursday night and early Friday morning, Israeli warplanes killed four more Palestinians in the on-going assault on Gaza which has seen 68 killed and over 165 wounded in the first weeks of January alone. Gaza, as the world, watches with apprehension to see how Israel will react to the act of basic human desperation and frustration which led to breaking down the Wall.

Mohammed Omer is a student living in Rafah. His website contains photos and reports about his home town - “about our life, our community, the home demolitions, homeless families, the children in our camp.. About the tragedies that happen here every day.” www.rafahtoday.org

Saving us from the Poor People

author: city dweller
source: portland.indymedia.org

editor’s note: while some celebrate portland’s ‘dignity village’ which offers an independent and alternative lifestyle for previously homeless portlandians, others are concerned that it’s being used as an excuse to ‘clean up’ the city’s streets. after years of asking for significant action from victoria’s mayor and council, and with four separate committees now in place and a visit to portland behind them, it might be worth considering the consequences of their decisions, depending on what’s really motivating them to finally take action. Thanks to Ted Hawryluk for finding this article:

I understand the police have been sweeping Old Town to prove how “safe” it is down there for holiday shoppers. This goes along with the increased savagery being demonstrated by the city in their support for the “clean and safe” patrols. They say they are doing it for us. To improve something they call “quality of life” in Portland. I’m not so sure they understand just how stupid this really is.

You know, it’s like people who move out to the country and then freak out because they saw a coyote in their yard, and then expect the city to come to their “rescue” by hunting down every wild animal in the vicinity. If you can’t handle coyotes, I say, stay the fuck out of the country. And if you can’t handle people who are homeless, people who might have mental health issues, people who dress differently then they do in the suburbs, then stay out of Old Town. It’s that simple.

I remember some years back, when the newly minted “Pearl District” first began to gentrify. People were moving into expensive condominiums and something called “artists’ lofts,” where they paid a grand a month to live in a fake warehouse and pretend they were artists. And then, those same people were showing up in droves down at city hall, complaining because there were people sleeping in their doorways. (Likely, some of the doorway-sleeping culprits were the real artists who had been thrown out of the real warehouses, which had then been torn down to make way for the “artists’ lofts” and the condominiums.) In response, the city began cleaning up for the urban yuppies.

This is missing the point.

There is a reason why people want to live in the city. It has to do with the atmosphere here. There is a vibrant, gritty culture here that



does not exist anywhere else. People sense it when they come into the city from the burbs. They feel the creative alchemy bubbling up from the ground, seeping through cracks in the concrete all around them. There are people with stories to tell here.

Some people recognize all that, and take the city

for what it is. Others, though, are like the man who kills the golden goose. They feel that something special is here, something “golden” if you will, but they do not recognize it when they see it. They think they can make the city “better.” So they set about destroying the very thing that makes it what it is. In search of more gold, they start demanding that the people who were there first leave. They want the streets “cleaned up.” They want homeless people and interesting characters systematically relocated to reservations... somewhere else. They are the urban colonialists. They want things done their way, and they want everything shiny and new and clean. And safe.

And when they get their way, they create the stale, dead world they moved here from in the first place. The city becomes nothing more than a glass and steel shopping mall. Plastic and surface and all for sale. The gritty culture is gone, the interesting people are gone, the stories are gone. All that remains is shiny, new things no one cares about, boring people just like them, and places to go shopping. And who wants that? Nobody wants to live in a place like that. Nobody wants to visit a place like that.

So they all leave again. And the city begins to “decay” again. And the malls close down, and the housing prices plummet, and the warehouses empty out... and we can all move back again. And rebuild our own culture again. It’s not for sale.



Life in the Tree Tops of Northern California

by Jeff Muskrat

WOW! With gusts up to 55 miles per hour, it takes a lot of courage and dedication to stay HUNDREDS of feet in the air during hail, thunder, lightning, and severe winds. Even though mother nature and her fury tests treesitting activists, they stay strong in their cause.

These high altitude villages can be blown sometimes 15-20 feet in both directions as winds test the strength of these Ancient Redwoods, as well as the strength of their protectors. The villages remained occupied throughout the past week, even through the strongest winds, as the storm slammed into the North Coast.

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Liberation Social Psychology gets liberated in Chiapas

by Álvaro Moreno
(image thanks to chiapas.indymedia.org)



The International Congress of Liberation Social Psychology has been taking place in different Latin American countries for the past ten years. The most recent one took place in Santiago, Chile, early in November.

On Sunday November 25, a group of social justice practitioners, community activists, and scholars in Chiapas, Mexico, got together for the first time to start organizing the following congress. They requested that the next International Congress of Liberation Social Psychology to be held in Chiapas next year. Their request was granted by the congress authorities and the University of the Earth in Chiapas will be hosting this event in November of 2008.

What is Liberation Social Psychology?

Liberation Social Psychology grew from the work of Ignacio Martín-Baró, one of the six Jesuit priests and scholars murdered by the Salvadoran army in 1989.

The concepts and ideas of Liberation Social Psychology have developed over the last decade amongst a body of “alternative” psychologists in Latin America. Although the movement appears to be limited to Latin America, many of the ideas promoted by it are of relevance for those working with oppressed groups elsewhere in the world.¹

The most important contributions of Martín-Baró’s work focused on an analysis of political psychology, war and trauma, and the “de-construction” of a mainstream, individualistic and hegemonic psychology.² Following Martín-Baró’s thinking, key concepts continue to emerge from the ongoing debate among Liberation Social Psychology practitioners such as Venezuelan Maritza Montero and others. They explore Social Psychology with an emphasis on participatory social transformation, which includes psycho-social work with survivors of state oppression. What makes liberation social psychology even more interesting is that an analysis of the social, psychological and political realities confronting Latin America today cannot be missing.³

The challenge for the Mexican organizers of the IX Congress in 2008 will be to demonstrate how the International Congress of Liberation Social Psychology can take the experiences and realities of the marginalized indigenous communities in southern Mexico today, and integrate them into the scholarly contribution of thinkers, intellectuals and academics, which appears to dominate the current discourse.

For community psychologists working in Southern Mexico, like Cecilia Santiago, the face of liberation social psychology in Chiapas takes the form of support and training with indigenous, community-based mental health promoters, building local capacity in recognizing low-intensity warfare, engaging in crisis intervention with political prisoners, and gaining tools to facilitate mutual support groups for communities under torture and political violence. Cecilia likes to add another element to the picture, and that is the need to address the impact of alcoholism and domestic violence in society.

The setting chosen for the IX Congress is the University of the Earth in Chiapas, which is part of the Indigenous and Intercultural System of Informal Education which focuses on promoting training and capacity building of indigenous communities by offering courses for indigenous youth in different trades and arts, including sewing, computers, music, carpentry, etc.⁴ About 150 indigenous youth attend the university at any given time and by maintaining a “barefoot philosophy” that encourages the use of local resources and functions in a rustic setting and infrastructure, the university seems to be largely self-sufficient.

Expectations are high after the Chile congress, where nine of the most prestigious universities in the country were involved in organizing it in a highly academic environment. The next International Congress of Liberation Social Psychology in Chiapas will offer the opportunity to reaffirm the participatory social transformation principles originally envisioned by Martín-Baró.

For more information on the IX International Congress of Liberation Social Psychology please visit their webpage: <http://psicosocialchiapas.blogia.com/>

¹ Mark Burton - Liberation Social Psychology: Learning From Latin America. Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology. Web: <http://homepages.poptel.org.uk/mark.burton/PSLarticle3final.pdf>
² Interview with Cecilia Santiago, Social Psychology practitioner working with political prisoners and indigenous communities in Mexico. July 2007
³ Maritza Montero: Ética y Política en Psicología, las Dimensiones no Reconocidas. Translated from webpage: www.bib.uab.es/pub/athenea/15788646n0a1.htm.
⁴ For more information on the Indigenous and Intercultural System of Informal Education please see the web site for the Oaxaca Earth University: www.uniterra.org.

Life in the Tree Tops of Northern California

cont'd fm pg 5

It is dangerous simply to be on the ground during high winds in the woods, especially in forests surrounded by clear-cuts. Normally, the winds would be buffered by surrounding trees, acting as a wind shield, and protecting the inner woods. However, Nanning Creek and Fern Gully lack the protection that a normal, “healthy” forest has due to excessive logging.

The first time that I sat in a tree was in Nanning Creek, during a massive winter storm a few years ago. It was challenging enough to climb 160 feet to “Spooner’s” lower living space in the rain and wind for my first experience. As the storm progressed the first night, I found my self clinging to the platform ropes for dear life as I watched surrounding trees sway back a forth in the winds. I wondered if I could make it through without giving up and climbing down.

The feeling is comparable to being in a very small “dingy” boat caught in a squall, only this “boat” was suspended high in a Ancient Redwood tree. As the storm progressed the second day and trees began to fall around us, I began to trust “Spooner” the tree and accept my situation. I chose to protect a being that was over two thousand years old and my place was to “go down with the ship” if by chance that this was “Spooner’s” last storm.

Imagine the storms that “Spooner” experienced these past two millennia. Spooner has seen earthquakes, floods, fires, and greater storms than we or our children will ever see, hopefully. This brought a sense of



peace to me and helped reaffirm my presence. “Spooner” was never going to drop us. As I was thinking this, all of a sudden, my treemate and I hear a loud cracking and popping sound.

My first thought was that the “Sprout” that our platform is partially secured to was breaking off. “Sprout” is a branch, technically called a reiteration, but imagine this branch being about the size of a second growth tree, about 4-5 feet in diameter. “Sprouts” are known to fall from Coast Redwoods, part of Sequoia Semperviren’s reproduction cycle. I thought we were about to fall 160 feet, crashing to the forest floor below. My treemate helped keep me calm and collected as the sound got louder and closer.

BOOOOOOOOM! “Spooner” shook as if there was a large earthquake. My first thought was that we were safe but also I believed our tree “Spooner” was hit by another tree. Luckily, this was not the case. After inspecting the damage in the morning, we discovered that a large second growth tree had fallen over 500 feet away from “Spooner”, on the edge of the grove and the clear-cut.

I am grateful to “Spooner”, as well as the Universe, for protecting us through that wild and dangerous storm. We were in a place that even loggers refuse to enter during mild inclement weather, due to the danger of falling trees and “Widow Maker” branches. It takes spirit and dedication to protect these ancient giants. It takes faith and guts to stay in a swaying Redwood as trees fall around you. Anyone who treesits is definitely a hero, but choosing to risk your life in these fierce winds qualifies these brave activists as super heroes!

I am reminded of my “close to death” experience every time I visit Nanning Creek. The tree that fell so close, yet luckily so far to “Spooner”, actually fell across our path into the Ancient Grove that we are protecting. The shoots of new growth reach for the sky and remind me that these life forms are precious and worth protecting. No matter how tired I am from hiking in supplies, or burned out from the psychological aspect of helping support a treesit, my heart is lightened and my spirits lifted every time I reach the end of my trek at the fallen one.

The fallen tree created a nice bridge for us to walk across on our way in, avoiding the mudslide and slash that Pacific Lumber is famous for, across our county. It is natural for Redwoods to fall, and for reiterations to break off, creating new trees. Redwoods reproduce that way. Redwoods seeds have only a .05 germination rate. Most redwood trees come from fallen trees, reiterations or stumps that are fortunate to have fallen naturally and left to grow or decompose. Clear-cuts are unnatural, and logging companies are forced to sometimes plant these destroyed areas, usually with cloned GMO trees.

If a tree falls in the woods, does it make a sound? Of course it does, especially for someone who is there risking their life to protect these Ancients. But there is both the physical sound of a tree snapping and crashing to the floor, and the metaphysical sound as the process of rebirth begins for a Coast Redwood. It is an experience that only a select few brave and dedicated activists are fortunate enough to hear. This natural sound, opposed to chainsaws and what follows, is truly a blessing and a reward.

To help protect these ancient ones,
please visit: humboldtforestdefense.blogspot.com

May the forests be with us...Always!

Memoirs of a Langford Forest Defender

by Kalanu

February 13 08 - Last night I went to sleep up in the first tree sit platform. We knew we were facing some kind of showdown this morning, but we assumed it was going to be another attempt by the city to survey. We thought maybe they would be accompanied by RCMP officers willing to arrest people for obstruction.

This morning, just before dawn, I watched from my platform as a half dozen flashlights appeared in the kitchen area below me. I watched as more flashlights arrived and began to quickly scatter throughout the forest. As the sun came up I noticed about a dozen RCMP officers at the bottom of my tree, and they noticed me. In the next hour, as they attempted to talk me down, more officers arrived, some armed with assault rifles (weapons that look like machine guns) and ‘less-lethal’ bean bag shotguns.

I asked them if they had an injunction and they informed me that I was to be arrested for mischief, though they could not name which section of the criminal code they were referring to. I continued to refuse and they continued to move forward.

At one point I saw one of the SWAT team members fiddling with something on his assault rifle, as another officer informed me that there was no one left in the woods but myself and lots of cops. I was told that neither my lawyer, my support team or media would be allowed in the forest. At this point I was getting quite worried for my safety. I was again informed that the only safe way for me to come down would be voluntarily, and when I noticed a half dozen people in climbing gear I made the decision to come down from the tree and try to find out whether everyone else had gotten arrested or whether a call had been made for more support to show up.

I was handcuffed, read my rights, had my knife taken away and was led out of the forest. I passed literally dozens of SWAT team looking fellas, some with dogs, everyone with lots of gear, spread out all around the woods, keeping a perimeter and standing guard at every possible trail junction. To say it was overkill is an understatement.

As I was lead away I could hear my brothers, Noah and Luke, shouting from their platforms. Noah held out for a few hours before they extracted him, and Luke held out another couple hours after that. It sounds like Luke had a bit of fun with the traverse lines before they got him down. The climbers would ascend one tree, and Luke would traverse to the other. We learned this from a few brief phone calls Luke made from his cell phone before we lost contact with him. Otherwise, none of us had any contact with the other tree sitters after I was led out. A huge perimeter was set up, those of us arrested were told we would be arrested again if we came anywhere near it, and even the press were not allowed anywhere near the area.

Not soon after I came out, a huge feller/buncher machine came by. This is a giant machine capable of harvesting many trees at once. It is one of the more destructive pieces of machinery I’ve ever seen. I yelled at the driver to go home, we weren’t letting him in, and two others stood in the middle of the road to block its path. One of those was Ingmar, who has been targeted as a ‘leader’. The RCMP wasted no time in slamming Ingmar to the ground and hauling him off to jail.



Several of us went to the police station and asked about the arrestees and were given many conflicting stories as to when we could expect to see our brothers again.

From there we went to the storage facility where our belongings from the treesit were being stored. We managed to claim some equipment and personal gear, but a few personal backpacks and sleeping bags, not to mention a half dozen bikes and the Food Not Bombs bike cart were taken to the dump. Our ropes and climbing harnesses (with the exception of the one I wore out of the forest) have been seized as evidence.

Two of the other campers (who were woken earlier today with machine guns and attack dogs in their face, arrested and released) have had their sleeping bags thrown away. This on

top of the fact that their home has just been bulldozed.

I still have not properly grieved the loss of this beautiful place. I feel, to quote one of the other tree sitters, like I have lost a limb. This land is more than sacred to me and I when I finish this email, a long, brutal day will wind down and I will shed many tears.

We lost a great deal today, more than most people will ever know. The owls returned to nest this week, along with other migratory birds, and I could hear them chirping even as the trees were being cut. Yesterday I was ecstatic to discover new young nettle plants sprouting near the kitchen. Today I am devastated because it is all gone. So much food and medicine. Gone. Another piece of priceless First Nations heritage, gone.

Many thanks to everyone who came out this morning to witness and who have vowed to continue. This is not over. This is far from over. A serious crime against nature has been committed today and we will never forget that. Much love and respect.



Show Some Gratitude

by cyann ray

According to the experts, showing gratitude is one of the keys to happiness. Some folks may find such appreciation difficult to muster. For the poor, the socially marginalized and those living with chronic pain, being grateful can be a challenge. Perhaps this is why we often associate poverty with misery.

My mantra has grown to become ‘things could be worse.’ This helps me cope with, for example, having to spend over 60% of my scant income on rent/utilities to a millionaire slumlord who ignores the rodent infestation and neglects his properties. Things could be worse. I could be homeless.

I’ll be fifty any day now and I’d like to take this opportunity to consider the positive experiences I’ve lived through that make me grateful for this precious life.

I’m fairly grateful for surviving childbirth. My mom contracted meningitis in her third trimester, so it was touch and go for a while. My rural upbringing and extended family created a love for the natural world and a general trust for humankind. Not a bad way to start off. Bedtime was early and enforced and there were chores to do as well. Children need discipline and boundaries lest they grow up unruly and disrespectful. So despite resenting it at the time, I’m now grateful for all those rules.

Regular camping, hiking, swimming and extensive car travel not only taught me how to pitch a tent, build a fire, read a map and not fear the water, but such recreational exposure enriches a child’s developing world. I know it enriched mine.

So did photography. Throughout the 60s, my Dad’s family slide shows lit something inside me. He bought me my first camera when I was twelve. Here we are 38 years later and photography remains a core source of joy and expression for me.

I’ve always enjoyed writing as well and growing up there was plenty of “G.O.S.” paper around the house. Decades before any blue box program, my Dad would bring home otherwise discarded paper from the office and provide an inadvertant lesson in recycling. “Good one side” he’d call it....perfect for crayons and young minds.

As this young mind approached adolescence there was a move into the big city (Toronto) and a delicious new independence. Boy, am I glad to have spent my busy teens with the best public transportation system in North America. The T.T.C....the red rocket. Freedom, efficiency and reducing vehicular traffic for generations.

And let’s not forget affordable train travel pre 1985. For a couple of hundred bucks you could go across the country, getting off wherever for however long you wanted. The ticket was good for a year. Hardly a better way to see our country.

I loved the full and distinct seasons of Ontario. The smell of spring...the warmth of summer...the colours of fall and the SNOW! I love the stuff. What’s more exhilarating than tobogganing or cooler than a snowman? How about skating on the Rideau Canal?

We can’t mention our nation’s capitol without thinking politics. A big heartfelt thanks goes out to Tommy Douglas and his universal healthcare and to the man I first voted for, Trudeau. He removed the state from the bedroom creating less oppression for those with alternative lifestyles. He also introduced “social assistance,” which has kept me warm and fed since having to leave the workforce years ago.

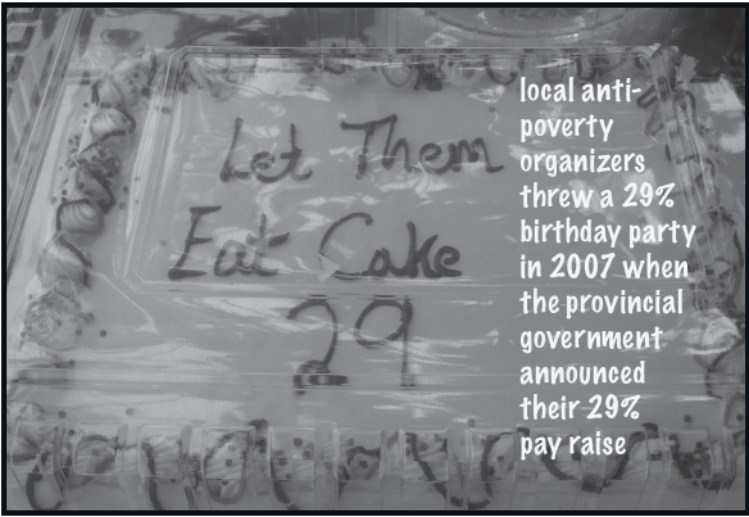
I’m grateful that I got to hear and see the magical souls of Ray Charles, Oscar Peterson, Marvin Gaye and George Harrison. I grew up with a piano in the house and my overly talented brother filled the air with Mozart and Bach, ensuring I’d develop some musical appreciation. Music, like all supreme forms of art, feeds us in unique and wonderous ways.

And speaking of wonderous, there is nothing more magical than reproducing. In 1980 I brought forth a fresh, new life and she remains at the top of any gratitude list. Family can anchor us when we are feeling unglued and can brighten dark days. I am so grateful that my Mom survived cancer for 26 years and most of her grandchildren got to experience a Nana’s love.

I’m glad that becoming a parent woke me up to the west coast. The Big Smoke is no longer a healthy place to grow. This Left Coast lifestyle not only improved my daughter’s asthma, but has helped center and calm me. The mountains, the rainbows, the fresh air and the fresh salmon (especially that candied smoked stuff...yum!), are all reasons to be grateful.

.....

My intent for this piece was to celebrate my 50th birthday by uncovering fifty things that I am grateful for. The plan is to become more appreciate of what’s good, to lessen my complaints, and maybe inspire others to do the same. Space restrictions and a deadline mean stay tuned for the conclusion of “Show Some Gratitude” in April’s Victoria Street Newz. Thanks.



Poverty: The Real Costs?

by George Simich

Today, I searched for a web site that would clearly articulate the real costs of poverty in Canada—not found. I went to provincial government web sites to access their budgets for each Ministry of Human Resources that would show the costs for rent for all Ministry offices; total salaries for all employees, including the Minister and the Deputy Minister; the costs for

utilities, transportation etc. —not found.

What I wanted to find was the line item costs for every Ministry of Human Resources in every province and territory, as well as the total budget for HRDC; and, of the total budgets for these provincial or federal ministries, what percentage of those budgets did each Ministry provide as assistance or support payments. In other words, what costs accrue from providing the service compared to the cost of assistance itself—not found. I was also interested in a comprehensive estimate of all related costs such as,

Health care: physical and mental health costs (i.e. emergency room visits, drop-in clinic visits, etc.)

Policing and court costs associated with crimes of poverty, including spousal abuse, child abuse, robbery, prostitution, common assault, gang violence, weapons charges, drug offences, property crimes, etc.

Incarceration—both federal and provincial: total costs of warehousing the poor Non-profit and NGO funding as it relates to poverty, and its related costs in terms of rent, utilities, salaries, etc.—total budgets for all NP’s and NGO’s that are mandated to address this issue (Cool Aid; Sandy Merriman; Salvation Army etc.)

Contracted out costs of monitoring clients (G. T. Hiring Solutions, JobWave, Triumph, etc.)

Government funding for all think tanks that investigate poverty, then produce reports on poverty for the government

Charities and charity (i.e. food banks, soup kitchens, church groups, donations—related costs)

Addiction and rehabilitation costs

Outreach to the street community

Suicide

Homelessness: shelter and emergency shelter costs

Subsidized housing (building construction, maintenance and management costs)

And all other related costs not itemized in this list

Obviously, the cost of poverty involves far more than just the costs of providing a welfare cheque. What are the real costs of poverty: billions of dollars; tens of billions of dollars; or hundreds of billions of dollars?

Could an actuary determine the lifelong costs for a twelve-year old child, who currently lives with her/his parents in the comfort of their Chevy or Ford? Given that a child living in these circumstances is substantially more at risk of quitting school and engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour, what will be the cost incurred in neglecting this child, as opposed to protecting her/him? Poverty is cyclic. To condemn the parents is to condemn the child; our failure to nurture reflects our most base nature.

Canada could provide a Guaranteed Liveable Income for a fraction of the current cost, and experience a substantial decline in crime associated with poverty, which would further reduce the cost of poverty. What are the costs of not providing a welfare cheque to those who need assistance, but do not receive it? In order to save that \$600.00 per month, how much do we spend in other costs?

For all the NGO’s and non-profits engaged in research regarding poverty, not one web site provided a comprehensive estimate of these costs; such a web site may exist that articulates the total cost, but I could not find it. Until the total cost of poverty is accurately articulated, Canadians cannot even begin to make informed decisions regarding this issue.

The federal government, as well as the provincial and territorial governments would never tell us the real costs of poverty even if they knew; but they do not want to know; they especially do not want Canadians to know. Because if Canadians knew of poverty’s real impact, then we might demand that our governments make some fundamental adjustments to wealth distribution of our shared resources.

For example, we pay a front-line Human Resources bureaucrat \$32,000 - \$40,000 per annum to handle their extensive caseload; we pay a police officer \$45,000 to \$60,000 per annum to monitor the homeless. We pay two civil servants between \$67,000 and \$100,000 per annum to administer and to admonish the poor; how great the reward to emasculate the poor?

Because the crime is being homeless or poor, not making someone homeless or poor. In order to make an informed decision regarding the best means of addressing poverty, we need a comprehensive study that determines the real costs of poverty. As a university-educated, unemployed Canadian, I am quite willing and capable of conducting this study. The study would require two years of research; involve an additional researcher; and employ an administrative professional. This \$1,750,000 investment would reveal and clearly articulate the real costs of poverty in Canada, and provide the most pragmatic options for addressing it. I can start immediately.

George Simich is a Rebel without a Pause for social justice, anti-war, anti-capital punishment, environmentalist, anti-nuke and fighting the good fight since Vietnam.



WHAT COMES AROUND

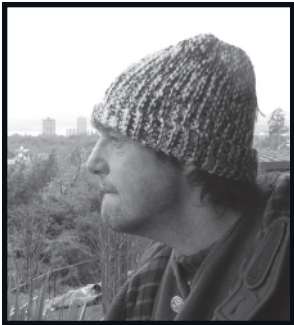
What comes around, goes around, Karma's on a wheel
You get what you dish out, my friend,
here ain't no way to steal
Everything's vibrations, nothing is for real
Playing music on the street in old Victoria town
The liquor stores been taken by the famine relief crowd
I'm fortunate to have enough to keep my stomach full
Tomorrow night is soon enough to finish up the pull
Besides I need to do a load of laundry anyway
Maybe they have something cheap in that Italian cafe
The lady there who waits on me says if I've got the time
She'd like to fix me a full meal, if I wouldn't mind
So next there's this big dinner sitting on my plate
"On the house!" she whispers as I stuff it in my face
The wheel of fortune turns within the wheel of Karma true
Everyone gets fed and warm and caring brings it back to you
Together two can carry more than two alone can do
And folks in Ethiopia who need that money bad
Got a little bit from me and giving makes me glad
It was more than nourishment for body, mind and soul
The ones who gave me dinner made it whole...



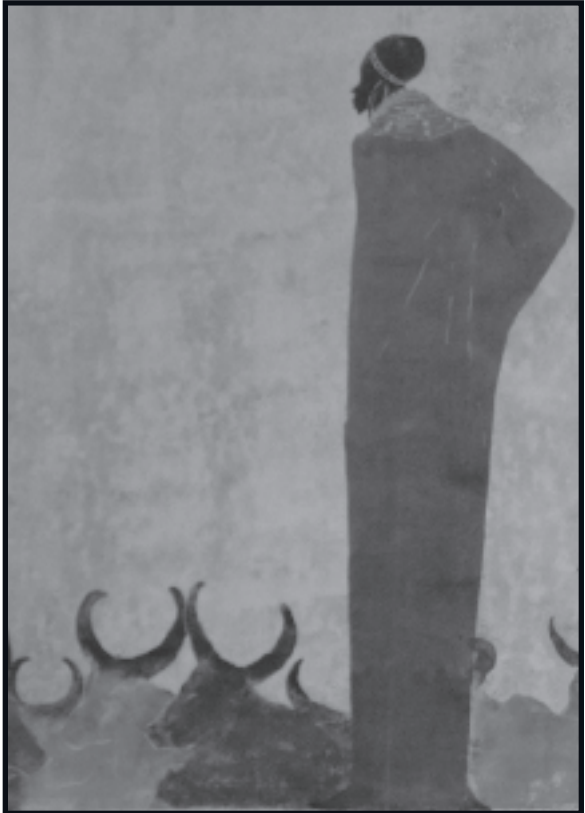
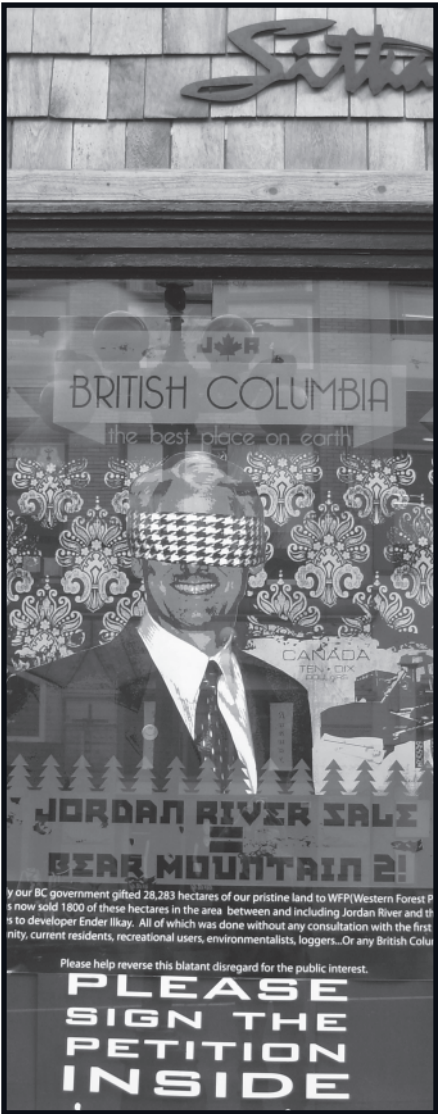
Jim Erkiletian

What Reason Religion For the Ragged Folk?

old stupid preaching of the invisible
to find reason with The Unseen.
It's obscene to believe this stuff
I say: Magician - leave the shadow
be more open and a little more clean.
Sell this stuff so slick and hard sell
40 days minus water
no food or rest
no wonder Dad's voice -
could've been
the stereo's on!
I'd rather any muse
Crazy! Crazy!
make anyone crazy -
see anything
lacking food
and vitamin.
You can only fool the fool
So long
Closed courtroom
to protect this magic! - stuff
This guff
This fluff
Throw em in the water
sink or swim
Take away the light on trees
Take away Capricorn present
from Second the Bearded
The Chimney Father
Take away spring ritual
What do you have?
superstition science smoke
mirror
light
a stage
hypnotism
dry ice vicar have a toke.



© Paul Burnside



under the influence

the late-summer sun, out there
in those deep green reserves
400 kms shy
off foot of the mountain
that sun's hot
is anxious to redden any sober neck
caught up naked
in mid-morning bake.
but, it bounced
right up off my young skin leaving
me sickly, pale
on the dogged end
of a three month drunk.
i hadn't been nearly straight
in over a week
hadn't seen my bed in a week
nor hit a shower stall
in days.
i was ripe
and i was a live wire.
all the high-times
of sloppy camaraderie
and easy sex
had left my body
taut and drained
and i was sick
with the experience
and a chronic lack
of sustenance.
some days running bush party
had ended, started
and ending again
and i hadn't left the patch
for anything longer
than a piss
in the creek.
new bodies pressed together
in violence in lust
to stare at me
across the fire
and the top of the bottle
to estimate
just what it was
they'd never become
and just how far one
could go.
the older locals thought me a sap, a tart
the youth knew me to be a fool
but as i drew upon
my borrowed cigarette
and the warm beer puke spewed back up
through my nose
i knew
i knew something
saw something under
that punishing sun
that they had forgotten;
nothing feels as good
as freedom
stolen back
at the brink of madness
right before the crash.
there was a profit of knowledge
i had drudged up, out there
under that sun
and i pretended to ignore it, at least til i
got some sleep
when i could revel in the reward
knowing the flesh
to be anything but weak
when dropped as far
as we all
had fallen.



j. fisher

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Street Newz is sold by a very important team of licensed vendors who sign a code of conduct. They buy the newspapers for \$.50 each, and resell them by donation, to encourage a sliding-scale economy that's inclusive and offers people a choice.

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Street Newz is a project of the Bread and Roses Collective - a registered not-for profit society.

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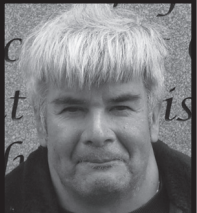
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Rose

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Have a Wonderful Day !!

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THE SNZ BOOKS

	Dec	Jan	Feb
Street Newz Revenue			
Paper Sales (from vendors)	533.00	650.00	545.00
Donations	50.00	405.00	150.00
Gifts (incl in-kind)	400.00	100.00	125.00
Advertising	0.00	0.00	125.00
Subscriptions	655.00	255.00	165.00
Bread & Roses Donation to SNZ	700.00	700.00	800.00
Total Street Newz Revenue	2338.00	2110.00	1910.00
Street Newz Expenses			
Salaries	700.00	700.00	800.00
Paper & Printing Costs	571.34	571.34	565.95
Office expenses/website	46.00	44.00	16.00
Postage	100.62	100.62	120.00
Total Street Newz Expenses	1417.96	1415.96	1501.95
Street Newz	920.04	694.04	408.05
Bread & Roses Revenue			
Grants	0.00	2300.00	0.00
Total Bread & Roses Revenue	0.00	2300.00	0.00
Bread & Roses Expenses			
Bus Tickets (2 for 1)	40.50	40.50	40.50
Street Newz Donation	700.00	700.00	800.00
Total Bread & Roses Expenses	740.50	740.50	840.50
Bread & Roses	-740.50	1559.50	-840.50
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Extra generous supporters:

Vicki Munch, Gordon Flett, Brishkai Lund, Victoria Peace Coalition, Anne, George & Jean

With Special thanks to:

John Chomyn, vendors and writers and Nancy the cycling delivery person, the Bread & Roses Collective, Colin Dower, Dave Baroff, Jeff Allen, Carol Quartermain, Monika & Neil Turpie, Jennifer Hill, Sheila & Bill Ede, Anna Galon, KAIROS

And those I may have overlooked - THANKS !!! - it wouldn't be the same without you.

INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATION

Victoria Street Newz is a proud member of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers. The mission of NASNA is to support a street newspaper movement that creates and upholds journalistic and ethical standards while promoting self-help and empowerment among people living in poverty. INSP is an umbrella organization that provides a consultancy service for its partner papers and advises on the setting up of new street papers and supports initiatives for marginalized people. Visit NASNA at www.nasna.org or the INSP at www.street-papers.org.

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